

Newspaper	NEW STRAITS TIMES
Date	03 DECEMBER 2016

Confident Najib sets tone for next general election

NST-3/12/2016

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak was his usual suave and confident self at the opening of the Umno delegates conference on Thursday despite facing a crisis-filled two years that would have brought a lesser man to his knees.

He showed his mettle when facing down a rebellion in Umno led by his former deputy, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, and supported by former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his son, former Kedah menteri besar Datuk Seri Mukhriz Mahathir.

They eventually formed Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (PPBM) and are out to topple Najib, although their rebellion has lost steam.

Najib also faced unrelenting attacks from DAP over numerous issues, including 1Malaysia Development Bhd.

Even his successful trip to China



came under criticism, along with his management of the economy and his politics.

It seems there was nothing he did that could satisfy his detractors.

But at the Umno meet, his moment came and it must have been a high point in his political career because he was as polished and confident as ever.

That is why Dr Mahathir and his group and their alliance with the DAP came in for special criticism in his opening speech. Because this alliance, according to Najib, is a se-

rious threat to Barisan Nasional in the general election.

He narrated how Umno had stood steadfast behind its president through every crisis in its long history, but was now sad to see Dr Mahathir, a respected statesman, "going against a party he had helmed for decades".

Najib said Dr Mahathir, who was once revered, "is now involved in despicable acts, working with DAP, the illegal Bersih rallies, Parti Amanah Negara, PKR and, worse, with foreign enemies like (George) Soros, whom he once hated and asked us to hate as a currency scoundrel."

"The truth is that he is the epitome of betrayal to Umno, the race and the nation," Najib, said labelling Dr Mahathir a turncoat.

It took him nearly 1½ years to arrive at this moment.

It shows his skills, his patience and his willingness to wait for the dramatic moment to deliver a counterattack.

He narrated how the next general election would be a contest between the Umno-led government and a DAP-led government.

Malaysians, he said, were at a crossroads where voters would decide who should lead the government: Umno or DAP.

He accused DAP of practising extreme liberalism and secularism and warned that if they triumphed at the ballot box, it would sound the death knell for many Bumiputera institutions.

"Najib's speech set the tone for the big battle ahead," said political analyst Professor Dr Sivamurugan Pandian.

"His speech stressed a lot on party loyalty, which is a prerequisite for

the battles ahead.

"Although he mentioned the general election, he did not elaborate on it. He was more keen on issues of loyalty."

"His emphasis was on unity and loyalty, especially after the rebellion by Dr Mahathir and his group.

"The party is still facing these challenges from PPBM."

Najib wants Umno fully behind him after the upheavals.

He explained the alliance with Pas, saying Pas president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang's private member's bill would be taken over by the government. But he gave an assurance to non-Muslims that the "long-awaited moment of unity among ummah" would not be against their welfare.

Najib has weathered the greatest tempest of his political career and it was on display at the Umno delegates conference.